DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 422 369 TM 028 929

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TITLE Educational Action Researchers Creating Their Own Living Educational Theories.
PUB DATE 1998-04-00
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Diego, CA, April 13-17, 1998).
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Action Research; Educational Research; *Educational Theories; Models; *Professional Development; *Researchers; *Theory Practice Relationship; *Values

ABSTRACT

A new paradigm of educational research is presented that is grounded in the living educational theories that educational action researchers produce for their own professional learning. In this new paradigm there is no one theoretical framework. Each individual action researcher is creating his or her own living theory in the explanations for their professional learning. The living theory theses and dissertations are also characterized by the explanatory power of the values and understandings that the action researchers embody in their explanations for their own learning and which they use as the standards of judgment to test the validity of their claim to knowledge. Values is defined as those qualities that give meaning and purpose to personal and professional lives. The importance of understanding the use of values as standards of judgment in testing the validity of such claims to knowledge is that they offer new standards to academic communities for legitimating the living theory paradigm. The unit of appraisal in the living theory paradigm is an explanation, produced by the singular action researcher, of his or her own professional learning in answering and researching questions related to improving one's own practice. The modes of inquiry used in creating living theories are focused on asking, answering, and researching questions related to improvement. In constructing living theories, it is necessary to include aesthetic values in claims to educational knowledge. In claiming that spiritual values can have a place in explanations for one's professional learning, the researcher acknowledges the importance of showing the meanings of these values in ways that are open to public validation. Data sources and evidence from a number of educational action researchers are listed in support of the living theory paradigm. The living educational theories being created through this paradigm can be related directly to the processes of improving students' learning. (Contains 47 references.) (SLD)

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Educational Action Researchers Creating Their Own Living Educational Theories

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This paper is prepared for the:
Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association in San Diego, CA
April 1998

TM028929

Educational action researchers creating their own living educational theories.

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A paper for presentation to the Action Research SIG, Session 9.45 at AERA, San Diego, 13-17 April 1998.

Background

In the March 1997 issue of Educational Researcher, Robert Donmoyer (1997) asks, *What is a Journal Editor to do when educational research is in an era of paradigm proliferation?* He attempts *'to figure out how to play the gatekeeper role at a time when there is little consensus in the field about what research is and what scholarly discourse should look like'.*

This was followed in the May issue by Part 1 of *Competing Visions of What Educational Researchers Should Do*, with contributions from former Presidents of AERA, William Cooley, Nate Gage and Michael Scriven (1997) and in the June/July issue by Part 2 of *Competing Visions for Enhancing the Impact of Educational Research* with contributions from David Berliner, Lauren Resnick, Larry Cuban, Nancy Cole, James Popham and John Goodlad (1997). In concluding his contribution to the June/July issue Donmoyer asks, *'How can we enhance the impact of educational research?'.*

I am interested in contributing to debates on the nature of new paradigms in educational research and educational theorising. In particular I want to direct the attention of educational researchers to the living educational theories produced by educational action researchers to explain their own professional learning as they answer and research questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?' (Whitehead, 1993; Evans, 1995; Eames, 1995, Hughes, 1996; Laidlaw, 1996; Lomax, 1994; Evans, Lomax & Morgan, 1998; Holley, 1997, Shobbrook, 1997; D'Arcy, 1998; Geelan, 1998)

In this era of paradigm proliferation I want to raise the possibility that such educational theories offer the most valid forms of explanation in the world today, for explaining the educational actions and influences of these action-researchers with their colleagues, pupils and students. In this paper I will keep to the headings in the original proposal accepted by AERA .

Purposes

To present a new paradigm of educational research grounded in the living educational theories which educational action researchers produce for their own professional learning.

Theoretical framework

In presenting the evidence to support a 'living theory' paradigm of educational research I know that I am asking you to understand this evidence in relation to a reconstituted meaning of 'theory'. In understanding my meaning it is important to see that there is no one 'theoretical framework' in the new paradigm. Each individual action researcher is creating her or his own living theory in the explanations for their professional learning in their educational enquiry. It may be helpful if I begin with familiar definitions of 'theory' before moving into a process of showing the meanings of living theories and showing how to distinguish living theories from other forms of theory.

I think you will understand 'theory' in similar terms to Argyris and Schön when they write about a set of interconnected propositions.

" Theories are theories regardless of their origin: there are practical, common-sense theories as well as academic or scientific theories. A theory is not necessarily accepted, good, or true; it is only a set of interconnected propositions that have the same referent - the subject of the theory.

Their interconnectedness is reflected in the logic of relationships among propositions: change in propositions at one point in the theory entails changes in propositions elsewhere in it.

Theories are vehicles for explanation and prediction. Explanatory theory explains events by setting forth propositions from which these events may be inferred, a predictive theory sets forth propositions from which inferences about future events may be made, and a theory of control describes the conditions under which events of a certain kind may be made to occur. In each case, the theory has an 'if...then....' form." (Argyris, C. and Schön, D. 1975)

In my view, living theories are not characterised solely by a set of interconnected propositions. The data sources below, include such propositions within their dialogical forms of representation of a living theory. Their meanings however, cannot be validly reduced to such propositions. The reason for this is that living theories contain 'I' as a living contradiction. Living theories cannot be reduced to a set of interconnected propositions because contradictions are necessarily embodied in living theories and excluded in propositional theories. They are excluded by a logic of propositions which claims that two mutually exclusive statements cannot be true simultaneously (Popper 1963). The question of how 'I', as a living contradiction, constitute a significant part of an explanation of their professional learning is answered in different ways by each action-researcher in the theses and dissertations listed below.

These living theory theses and dissertations are also characterised by the explanatory power of the values and understandings which the action-researcher embodies in their explanation for their own learning and which they use as the standards of judgement to test the validity of their claim to knowledge. The importance of understanding the use of values as standards of judgement in testing the validity of such claims to knowledge is that they offer new standards to academic communities for legitimating the new living theory paradigm. When I write about values I am meaning those qualities which give meaning and purpose to our personal and professional lives.

The creation of living theories begins in practice. The creation begins in the kind of enquiries which I think you will have engaged in of the kind, 'How do I do this better?', or 'How can I help you to improve your learning?', or 'How can I live my values more fully in what I am doing?'.

I draw support for my insistence on beginning with and in practice in the creation of living theories from Ryle's point about practice preceding propositional theories:

..... *practice precedes the theory of it; methodologies presuppose the application of the methods, of the critical investigations of which they are the products.... The crucial objection to the intellectualist legend is this. The consideration of propositions is itself an operation the execution of which can be more or less intelligent, less or more stupid. But if, for any operation to be intelligently executed, a prior theoretical operation had first to be performed and performed intelligently, it would be a logical impossibility for anyone ever to break into the circle.* (Ryle, p. 31 1949)

I was inspired in my commitment to the importance of values as explanatory principles in educational enquiries by Richard Peters' (1966) insistence that education should be understood as a value-laden practical activity. When studying educational theory with a team of philosophers at London University led by Peters between 1968-70, I initially accepted his disciplines approach to educational theory. In this approach, educational theory was held to be constituted by the disciplines of education where, philosophy, psychology, sociology and history were distinguished by their conceptual frameworks and methods of validation. However, I rejected this approach in 1971 on the grounds that this view of educational theory did not have the capacity to explain my own professional learning as an educator as I worked with my students on improving their learning.

I did not reject the part which these disciplines could play in creating and testing educational theories. What I rejected was the idea that any of these disciplines, in any combination which omitted my explanation for my professional learning, contained the possibility of producing a valid educational explanation for my professional learning as an educator as I asked, answered and researched educational questions of the kind, 'how can I improve this process of education here?'.

In the process of rejecting the disciplines approach to educational theory I made a decision to create and test my own educational theories to explain my professional learning as a teacher-educator and educational researcher. I was fortunate in reading Polanyi's (1958) work. Polanyi explained the basis of personal knowledge in terms of a decision to understand the world from one's own point of view as an individual claiming originality and exercising judgement, responsibly.

Perhaps because of my first degree in physical science I have retained a concern with validity and with clarifying the standards of judgement I use to test the validity of my claims to educational knowledge. I found support in developing an approach to validity in Habermas' work (1976):

The goal of coming to an understanding is to bring about an agreement that terminates in the intersubjective mutuality of reciprocal understanding, shared knowledge, mutual trust, and accord with one another. Agreement is based on recognition of the corresponding validity claims to comprehensibility, truth, truthfulness, and rightness. (p.3)

I seek to establish the validity of living educational theories by subjecting the explanations offered by action researchers to the questioning of a 'validation group'. This usually consisting of between 6-10 people, some of whom are working with the researcher and some who work from different paradigmatic perspectives. The kinds of question we focus on are: is the report comprehensible? (comprehensibility); Is there sufficient evidence to support the claims to knowledge? (truth); Are the meanings of the values shown and justified in the course of their emergence through practice? (rightness); Does the account offer an explanation for the individual's learning which shows a sustained commitment to living values in practice? (truthfulness).

In drawing on theoretical frameworks from Polanyi and Habermas, I do not want to give the impression that these form the basic theoretical frameworks for this paper. I want you to be clear that the basis of this paper is the living educational theories created by action researchers' studies of 'singularities'. These living theories show how researching one's own professional practice as a 'singularity' within a particular social and professional context, can contribute to a new paradigm of educational research.

Michael Bassey (1995), another former President of the British Educational Research Association, says that the term 'singularity' originates in an educational context in Helen Simon's (1980) Towards a Science of the Singular. Helen attributes the term to the inspiration of David Hamilton.

"A singularity is a set of anecdotes about particular events occurring within a stated boundary, which are subjected to systematic and critical search for some truth. This truth, while pertaining to the inside of the boundary, may stimulate thinking about similar situations elsewhere....." (Bassey, 1995, p. 111)

Bassey says that a *boundary* can be defined in space and time, for example as a particular classroom, or school, or local education authority, or as sets of these, in a particular period; or it may be defined as a particular person, or group of people, at a particular time and in a particular space. He points out that to some people the distinction between a study of a singularity and a search for generalisation is pedantic and unnecessary. He disagrees in terms of the research ethic of the pursuit of truth:

"The conclusions of research should only be generalised, meaning that they are firmly extrapolated beyond the population under study, if it is clearly established that the general population has the same characteristics as the population which has been researched. To assume that the findings from one study of a small group of primary school teachers, or fifteen-year-old children, or left-handed astrologers with blonde hair, can be extrapolated to others who fit the same description is nonsense! It is nonsense because there are so many other contextual variables which may determine what happens - variables of personal history, of understanding and of intention of all the actors involved, as well as variables of setting." (p.111)

The unit of appraisal in the living theory paradigm is an explanation, produced by the 'singular' educational action researcher, of her or his own professional learning in answering and researching

questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?'.

Of fundamental importance in the creation and testing of living theories is the use of values as standards of judgement in testing the validity of the explanations. The living theory theses and dissertations in the data section below draw upon the following range of values. This is not intended as a comprehensive 'list' of values. Each living theory contains a unique constellation of values and understanding. I would add Robyn Ladkin's (1998) value of 'compassionate understanding' to the following values.

Aesthetic and moral values are used by Laidlaw (1996) in her explanation of her educative relationships with her pupils. She shows how these values are developmental in nature as she explores the implications of asking, *'How can I account for my own educational development by teaching 'The Ancient Mariner' to Rebecca, Zoë and other members of their Year Seven Class?'.*

Spiritual values are addressed by Cunningham (1997) in an explanation of his educative relationships as he supports teachers in their action enquiries of the form, *'How can I help my pupils to improve their learning.*

Dialogical and dialectical values have been explicated and used by Eames (1996) in his analyis of his professional knowledge-base as a teacher-researcher.

Methodological values have been demonstrated by Lomax (1997) and Hughes (1996), in their stories of their professional learning and educational development. Lomax has defined the values of the inter and intra-subjective dialectics in constructing an action research account. Hughes has examined the value of understanding the theoretical antecedents of the particular approach to action planning used in an action enquiry.

Political and economic values have been used by Whitehead (1993) in his explanation of his professional learning as a university teacher-researcher.

Educational leadership values have been revealed by Evans (1995), in the creation of her living theory as she researched her influence in the development of an action research approach to the professional learning of her colleagues.

Relational values have been used by Holley (1997) in constructing an explanation of her professional learning with her pupils and colleagues in a community school in the U.K. context between 1990-1996.

Curricular and assessment values have been used by D'Arcy (1998), Hayward (1991) and Walton (1992) in their narratives of their professional learning as they show what it means to them to make educative responses to pupils.

In making a distinction between the 'living educational theories' created by the above educational researchers and 'theoretical frameworks' I want to emphasise that living theories can include theoretical frameworks. For example, I use some of the ideas of Bakhtin (Holquist 1990) and Ilyenkov (1977) in justifying my inclusion of 'I' as a living contradiction within dialogical educational enquiries of the kind. 'How can I help you to improve your learning?'. To show you how I do this I will justify my use of 'living' in 'living theories' and my inclusion of 'I' as a 'living contradiction' within my claims to educational knowledge.

My use of 'living' in 'living theories'

In my educational enquiry, 'How do I improve what I am doing?', I exist as a value-laden centre of consciousness where my "I" has no experiential beginning and no end for me. In this I believe with Bakhtin in existence as dialogue:

"The only way I know of my birth is through accounts I have of it from others; and I shall never know my death, because my "self" will be alive only so long as I have consciousness - what is called "my" death, will not be known by me, but once again only by others... Stories are the means by which values are made coherent in particular situations. And this narrativity, this possibility of conceiving my beginning and end as a whole life, is always enacted in the time/space of the other. I may see my death, but not in the category of my "I", For my "I", death occurs only for others, even when the death in question is my own." (Holquist, 1990, p.37.)

Perhaps I should also add that I agree with Erich Fromm's (1960) point from his Fear of Freedom where he says that if a person can face the truth without panic they will realise that there is no purpose to life other than that which they create for themselves through their loving relationships and productive work. Hence my emphasis on good relationships and productive work.

I have described above my move to create an alternative possibility to the dominant 'disciplines' approach to educational theory. The original thought I had in 1971 was that instead of being constituted by the disciplines of philosophy, psychology, sociology and history, educational theory could be viewed as being constituted by the descriptions and explanations which professional educators created for their own learning as they answered practical questions of the kind, 'How do I improve this process of education here?'. This 'living theory' approach does not preclude the integration of insights from other theories. The problem I had with a view of educational theory derived from a 'rationalist' philosophy is the same problem identified by Bakhtin in the creation of his literary theories:

"As Bakhtin explains "I" do not fit into theory - neither in the psychology of consciousness, not the history of some science, nor in the chronological ordering of my day, not in my scholarly duties..... these problems derive from the fundamental error of "rationalist" philosophy... The fatal flaw is the denial of responsibility - which is to say, the crisis is at base an ethical one. It can be overcome only by an understanding of the act as a category into which cognition enters but which is radically singular and "responsible". (Morson, G.S. & Emerson, C. 1989, p. 13.)

I feel an affinity with Bakhtin in stressing the importance of singularity and responsibility. Given these agreements I looked for points of disagreement where someone influenced by Bakhtin's literary theories might not believe in my conception of my living educational theories. The main point of disagreement might be in his "Notes of 1970-71" where he says:

"Dialogue and dialectics. Take a dialogue and remove the voices (the partitioning of voices), remove the intonations (emotional and individualizing ones), carve out abstract concepts and judgements from living words and responses, cram everything into one abstract consciousness - and that's how you get dialectics."

The living theories I have placed on the internet would appear, in my judgement, to have found a way of embracing dialectics without removing the voices (some intonation has been lost) or carving abstract concepts from living words or cramming everything into one abstract consciousness. Let me now turn to 'I' as a living contradiction.

My use of 'I' as a living contradiction

I am using contradiction in the sense of two mutually exclusive opposites being experienced simultaneously and I want to distinguish between contradictions in experience and contradictions between statements. The law of contradiction which states that two mutually exclusive statements cannot both be true simultaneously has been used to eliminate contradictions from 'correct thought'. Popper's view was that theories which contain contradiction are useless as theories. Using the laws of inference he demonstrated that if a theory contained a contradiction 'we can infer from a couple of contradictory premises any conclusion we like' (Popper, 1963, p.319). For dialecticians such as myself contradiction as the concrete unity of mutually exclusive opposites is the central category of dialectics. But, as Ilyenkov (1977, p. 320) pointed out:

"... but no small difficulty immediately arises as soon as matters touch on 'subjective dialectics', on dialectics as the logic of thinking. If any object is a living contradiction, what must the thought (statement about the object) be that expresses it? Can and should an objective contradiction find reflection in thought? And if so, in what form?"

Ilyenkov died before he could answer his questions. Where I believe the creation and testing of living theories shows a way of answering them is through the integrating capacities of the individual 'I' who exists as a living contradiction and who creates explanations for her or his own learning in asking, answering and researching questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?'. I imagine that you will understand what I mean by living contradiction in that you will have had experiences of holding together your values and their negation. In your teaching you may believe in enquiry learning whilst at the same time recognise that you have acted in a way which has stifled this expression in your pupils. You may believe in a curriculum which supports autonomy but find yourself 'teaching to the test' in a way which denies this value. It is the experience of recognition that you hold certain values whilst at the same time experiencing their denial which characterises my meaning of 'living contradiction'.

Van Manen's (1990) framework for researching lived-experience can be used to support a 'grounded' analysis of the accounts of teacher-researchers as they create explanations for their own professional learning which involve their values as explanatory principles. Without fully embracing Van Manen's approach it has value in the creation of living theories in helping to explicate, reflectively, the meanings of the values which emerge through time and action:

"Hermeneutic phenomenological human science in education is, therefore, not simply an "approach" (alongside other approaches) to the study of pedagogy. That is, phenomenology does not simply yield 'alternative' explanations or descriptions of educational phenomena. Rather, human science bids to recover reflectively the grounds which, in a deep sense, provide for the possibility of our pedagogic concerns with children" (p. 173).

A central purpose of phenomenology is to understand the grounds for the possibility of our 'knowing' and 'understanding'. Without embracing this central purpose, the focus on experience and on understanding the grounds of our understanding in relation to the meanings of the values which emerge through practice (rather than the possibility of our knowing), are part of the creation of living theories which can be related directly to the processes of improving the quality of teachers and students' learning. In other words the central purpose of a living theory approach to educational knowledge is to create and test theories which can be used directly in the processes of improving the quality of learning. As part of this process it is important to understand the grounds (values and understandings) which are being used to test the claims to knowledge. This is where hermenuetic phenomenology has a part to play in the creation of living theories without such theories and modes of enquiry below being reduced to a mode of phenomenological enquiry.

Modes of enquiry

The modes of enquiry used in creating living theories are focused on asking, answering and researching questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'. In the process of answering such questions, the action researchers find it helpful to use professional learning or action/reflection cycles of: expressing concerns when values are not lived fully in practice; constructing action plans with details of the data to be collected to enable a judgement to be made on the effectiveness of the actions; acting and data gathering; evaluating in terms of understanding and the effectiveness of the actions; modifying concerns, plans and actions in the light of the evaluations. Traditional forms of social science methods are used in some of their enquiries. These include interview, questionnaire and triangulation of both methods and interpretation.

In relation to enquiries concerning generalisability I point to the form of professional learning cycles which gave the action researcher's above an initial confidence that there was a discernable form of enquiry which they could use to take their own enquiry forward. In answering questions about the

generalisability of the dialogical and dialectical forms of living theories and the values base of their standards of judgement I turn to Bassey's (1998) notion of 'fuzzy generalisation'.

" 'Fuzzy generalisation' is the term I am suggesting for statements like, 'Do x in the classroom and y may happen'. It is the researcher's equivalent of the politician's soundbite. On its own it has little credence, but supported by a research report which gives the context in which x has led to y, it could be a valuable contribution to the professional discourse which in turn develops classroom practice or educational policy. This idea.... could provide the missing link between researchers and users." (p.7).

The modes of inquiry are also focused on resolving the issues of representation and legitimation (Denzin & Lincoln 1994). These issues are related to the questions asked by Eisner (1997). How do we display what we have learned? What forms can we trust? What modes are legitimate? How shall we know?

The modes of inquiry used in the creation of living theories differ for each educational action research study of singularity in the process of representing and legitimating the claims to educational knowledge. In developing modes of enquiry in relation to **representation** and the questions, how do we display what we have learned and what forms can we trust, Shobbrook (1997), for instance, uses the form of her correspondences with her tutor to give a form to her living theory. Holley (1997) uses the metaphor of a 'kaleidoscope' to communicate the shifting patterns in her understandings. Eames (1995) explains how he uses his conceptions of dialogue and dialectics to give a form to his professional learning and knowledge. Laidlaw (1996) demonstrates how the living standards of judgement she uses to test the validity of her claims to educational knowledge are themselves changing and developing in the course of giving form and meaning to her professional life with her pupils. Evans (1995) explains how her mode of inquiry involved the creation and use of fictional accounts in dealing with difficult emotional issues which arose in her educational leadership as a vice-principal of a secondary school.

In representing their living theories each individual has constructed a unique synthesis of values, understanding, context and practice into a comprehensible explanation of their own professional learning. The assertions in their explanations are supported by evidence. The explanations include the explication and justification of the meanings of the values which emerge through time and practice. They explains their own learning in their educational enquiry.

The modes of inquiry used to **legitimate** the claims to knowledge and answer questions of the kind, what modes are legitimate? and, how shall we know?, are focused on the ways of testing the **validity** of the claim to have explained the learning in the educational enquiry. These tests are related to the nature of the values and forms of understanding which constitute the explanatory principles for the learning. In my own study of 'singularity' I have emphasised the importance of developing an understanding of the politics of educational knowledge when engaging with the processes of legitimating living theory theses (Whitehead, 1993; Hughes, Denley and Whitehead, 1998).

In addition to questions of validity, the modes of inquiry used to legitimate living theories in the Academy often involve responding to inquiries concerning objectivity, subjectivity and rigour. The modes of inquiry are grounded in the researchers' subjective interpretations of their experience. The view of objectivity often used in the accounts is similar to Popper's (1972) view of objectivity being grounded in intersubjective criticism and in subjecting accounts to the mutual rational control of critical discussion. The validation groups provide this critical discussion and link to the process of legitimation. So, for example, the mode of inquiry related to 'rigour' for use in legitimating action research accounts is drawn from the six principles defined by Winter (1989). That is, the accounts are judged in Winter's terms on the quality of their reflexive and dialectical critiques, the use of a plural structure and multiple resources, the risk involved and the contribution to theory, practice transformation.

Focusing on validity, the easiest tests of validity to apply are those in which propositional assertions can be supported by evidence. So, for example, when Forrest (1983), a teacher educator, initially claimed to have influenced the professional development of a teacher, a validation group was not convinced

by the evidence produced and asked for stronger evidence in relation to his claim as his enquiry continued. A subsequent meeting of the group was impressed by the strength of the evidence which showed how Forrest had enabled a teacher to help her pupils to learn a geographical concept which previously she had believed was out of the reach of her pupils.

The most difficult tests of validity to engage with and appreciate are those involving ethical, aesthetic and spiritual values. Difficulties arise because the meanings of such values are embodied in one's form of life and cannot be understood using propositional forms alone. Understanding the meanings of these values requires some form of expressive art. What I mean is that 'showing and telling' requires a mixture of lexical and ostensive definitions.

For example, consider the meanings of such values as freedom, respect, truth, democracy and compassionate understanding. These meanings differ in relation to the context of their use. What I am claiming is that the meanings of such values, as they are embodied in practice, can be clarified in the course of their emergence through time and action. For instance, in 1991, a working party on a matter of academic freedom in my University concluded that my academic freedom had not been breached, but that this was due to my persistence in the face of pressure. They concluded that a less determined individual might well have been discouraged and hence constrained. The meaning of the value of academic freedom in the narrative of my professional learning (Whitehead 1993) can be understood through time in my actions as I persisted in the face of pressure. The validity of my claim to have partially explained my own professional learning in relation to my commitment to the value of academic freedom is open for you to test through the mixture of ostensive and lexical definitions used in my text.

Now consider the meanings of our aesthetic values and the part they play in explanations for our learning in our educational enquiries and in testing the validity of such explanations. Let me try to share my understanding of aesthetic value in terms of the art of a dialectician. As I understand this art it is expressed in holding together both a capacity for analysis with a capacity for synthesis, holding the One and the Many together (Plato). I associate this art with my sense of identity or wholeness. I experience my aesthetic values in the commitment to hold on to my sense of identity in the face of pressures which undermine my sense of wholeness. It is this sense of giving form to my life which I associate with my aesthetic values and which I use in this sense in my explanation of my professional learning in my educational enquiry. I do hold education to be a form of art in that it is essentially concerned with helping individuals to give a form to their own life as they engage with the possibilities which life itself permits. Yet, I know that the above words do not convey my meanings of my aesthetic values. In his critique of the rationalist philosophy of Hirst, Reid (1979) makes his point about the aesthetic experience and knowledge:

Real musical intuitive knowledge is direct as the arrow. Many insightful things, in forms of knowledge-that and -how, can be said by musicians; but musical knowledge, qua musical, does not reach its musically cognitive consummation finally from -that or -how. Rather, knowledge-that or -about music in itself derives from direct musical gnosis, musical intuition. Even technical knowing-how of performance is barren musically without underlying musical intuition. In the sphere of art, at any rate (and perhaps in other spheres too) Professor Hirst puts the cart before the horse - or maybe he has just unharnessed the horse.

I am asking you to consider the importance of including aesthetic values in claims to educational knowledge. My own insistence on including these values, in my own explanation for my educational development, is due to my belief that education is essentially concerned with the processes through which we give (like an artist or a musician) form and content to our lives as we learn about ourselves and our world. For me, the art of an educator is expressed in educative relationships as the educator reponds to the educational needs of the pupil. In understanding such relationships, within which individuals are giving a form to their own lives, I am suggesting that you and I may need to explore alternative forms of data representations. I am echoing Eisner (1993, 1997) in supporting the use of multi-media presentations, in conjunction with the expressive arts, to communicate the nature of the aesthetic values which can help to explain the educative influence of teachers with their pupils.

Finally, let me consider the most difficult issue of meaning which is concerned with the spiritual values in our explanations for our learning and in our tests of validity. I wonder if those of you, who, like me, attended Elliot Eisner's Presidential Address to AERA in 1993, were powerfully affected by the spiritual quality of the combination of the visual imagery of the smoke from the concentration camp chimney and the quality of Eisner's (1993) reading of Elie Wiesel's experience in a Nazi death camp:

Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky. Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever. Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to life. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God himself. Never, (p.7).

Perhaps because I was born in 1944 in England this evokes a spiritual response in imagining the awesome violations and crimes against their humanity which some human beings suffered at the hands of others. And this knowing, includes the knowledge that these crimes against humanity were carred out as a matter of state policy.

If asked about the spiritual ground of my being I usually draw on insights from Martin Buber (1937). In my response I say that I identify my fundamental spiritual response to life as a state of being grasped by the power of being itself. I also say that I express my life affirming stance in I-You relations in which I hope my research students feel valued in the ground of their being and feel affirmed in their productive work as they explore the implications of asking questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'. Again, I know that my words alone will not carry my meanings. These meanings are beyond words. These meanings, as they are felt by students, can sometimes be seen in the way a student's face 'lights up' with the feeling of 'being valued' or of 'intuiting' a significant relationship within their enquiry. However, I do think language is important in directing our attention to the meanings of these spiritual qualities. My colleague Ben Cunningham has expressed such values in his tutoring of his student Marion as follows:

"I believe that I enabled Marion to move forward more confidently regarding her initial fears about her capacity to tutor. I believe I, too, learned greatly from the experience. I learned that I can rely on my intutive care for others, a care that is true and altruistic. My care is a form of commitment that embraces the human quality of relationships. I embrace others because they are human and I am human. My care is a legitimate anxiety I hold about ensuring that the person I am with in the educative relationship is as free from fears as is humanly possible. I go about the work of trying to remove fears by finding out the gifts and qualities the other has and then commenting on them positively. I do it not just because I believe it's the right thing to do. I do it because I very strongly feel that others are in constant need of appreciation, as I am myself. I also believe that I can never exaggerate the gifts and talents others have. Without doubt, of course, some have greater gifts and talents than others. I take that for granted. But I'm not interested in comparison. When I am with a person, I believe I mostly see only that person. The question of comparing their gifts and talents with somebody else's doesn't arise. If it did, it would mean that my attention had wavered, had wandered from the person I am with. I believe my lack of interest in making comparisons enables me to concentrate on the uniqueness and individuality of others. It is also why I am wary of the concept of 'community' unless it finds a way of enabling others to become who they are meant to become."

In claiming that spiritual values can have a place in explanations for one's professional learning I recognise the importance of showing the meanings of these values in ways which are open to public validation. Hence my emphasis on multi-media presentations. In my own work I have drawn attention to such values, acknowledged the limitations of my language, and emphasised the importance of presenting evidence which include such values in claims to knowledge which are open for you to test (Whitehead 1993).

Data sources and evidence

The data sources and evidence which I think will convince you of the validity of a living theory paradigm include the Ph.D., M.Phil. and M.A. Theses and Dissertations of the educational action researchers below. They graduated from the Universities of Bath and Kingston between June 1996 and December 1997 and claim to have created their own living educational theories. They include a senior school administrator, a career's advisor, a teacher of English, a vice-principal of a secondary school and a senior police-woman. I will take key statements from the abstracts of each thesis and dissertation which define their claims to knowledge and which I believe are supported by the data and evidence. The examiners who recommended the legitimation of these Theses and Dissertations within the Academy are also provided.

Kevin Eames. (1995) *How do I, as a teacher and an educational action-researcher, describe and explain the nature of my professional knowledge?* Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath. Examiners; Professors David Sims and Chris Day.

This thesis is an attempt to make an original contribution to educational knowledge through a study of my own professional and educational development in action-research enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'..... The analyses I make of the resulting challenges to my thinking and practice, show how educators in schools can work together, embodying a form of professional knowledge which draws on Thomism and other manifestations of dialectical rationality.

Moyra Evans. (1995) *An action research inquiry into reflection in action as part of my role as a deputy headteacher.* See chapter 8 on Creating my own living educational theory. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Kingston. Professors Jean Rudduck and Michael Bassey.

This thesis describes and explains how I established learning communities of teachers in order to improve the educational experiences of our students. I have used Schön's (1983) work on reflecting-in-action to theorise about the nature of the reframing teachers need to undertake in order to understand and put into effect practical interventions which result in them living their educational values more consistently in their practice. The enquiry is contextualised as a study of my leadership role as a woman deputy head action researcher in a comprehensive schools, acknowledging that I see my work through a 'female lens' as I present an authentic description and account of my educational practice.

Erica Holley. (1997) *How do I as a teacher researcher contribute to the development of living educational theory through an exploration of my values in my professional practice?* M.Phil. Thesis, University of Bath. Examiners; Dr. Paul Denley, Reader Tony Ghaye.

My thesis is a description and explanation of my life as a teacher and researcher in an 11-18 comprehensive school in Swindon from 1990-1996. I claim that it is a contribution to educational knowledge and educational research methodology through the understanding it shows of the form, meaning and values in my living educational theory as an individual practitioner as I researched my question, "How do I improve what I am doing in my professional practice?'.

With its focus on the development of the meanings of my educational values and educational knowledge in my professional practice I intend this thesis to show the integration of the educational processes of transforming myself by own knowledge and the knowledge of others and of transforming my educational knowledge through action and reflection. I also intend the thesis to be a contribution to debates about the use of values as being living standards of judgement in educational research.

Jackie Hughes. (1996) *Action Planning and Assessment in Guidance Contexts: How can I understand and support these processes?* Ph.D Thesis, University of Bath. Examiners, Professors Michael Bassey, Ian Jamieson

This thesis presents an action enquiry approach to improving understanding of action planning and assessment in guidance within further education college and careers service provision in Avon. Within the thesis I integrate the elements within my enquiry to provide an original, holistic representation of my search for understanding of, and my learning about, these issues and about my own educational development. Within this synthesis, I also offer a new understanding of the theoretical origins of action planning and the ways in which these can influence practice. In addition I proffer a new 'process' model which incorporates assessment in guidance within the action planning cycle.

Moira Laidlaw. (1996) *How can I create my own living educational theory through accounting to you for my own educational development?* Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath. Examiners; Professors Mowenna Griffiths, Richard Winter

I intend my thesis to be a contribution to both educational research methodology and educational knowledge. In this thesis I have tried to show what it means to me, a teacher-researcher, to bring, amongst others, an aesthetic standard of judgement to bear on my educative relationships with Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Higher Degree education students and classroom pupils in the action enquiry, 'How do I help my students and pupils to improve the quality of their learning?'. By showing how my own fictional narratives can be used to express ontological understandings in a claim to educational knowledge, and by using insights from Coleridge's 'The Ancient Mariner' to illuminate my own educational values, I intend to make a contribution to action research methodology. By describing and explaining my own educational development in the creation of my own 'living educational theory' I intend to make a contribution to educational knowledge.

Hilary Shobbrook. (1997) *My Living Educational Theory Grounded In My Life: How can I enable my communication through correspondence to be seen as educational and worthy of presentation in its original form.?* M.A. dissertation, University of Bath. The external examiners for this degree programme were Professors Howard Bradley, Ray Bolam and David Hopkins

In the process of writing, this dissertation has developed a dialogue which goes some way towards explaining my own educational development. It thereby reveals my living educational theory which is grounded in my own life. I have engaged in dialectic enquiry which is progress through ongoing dialogue and represented mainly in the form of correspondence..... I have included the University criteria for judging a dissertation as a subject of my debate in order to enable me to come to terms with such criteria in the context of this account. I hold the view that my personal and professional practice are inextricably linked to each other and to my life as a whole.

Additional data sources and evidence include the living theory accounts of university academics in research into their own teaching and learning. (Lomax, 1997; Geelan, 1998; Whitehead 1993)

Conclusions

I have claimed that educational action researchers have a fundamental role to play in the development of a new paradigm of educational research. In this paradigm living educational theories are being created which can be related directly to the processes of improving pupils' and students' learning. Such theories are being created from practical, educational enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?', 'How can I help you to improve your learning?' and 'How can I live my values more fully in my practice?'.

I have drawn evidence to support these claims from the data of the 'living theory' theses and dissertations on the Web at the address below. I have explained the use of values as new standards of judgement for testing the validity of the living theories produced in this new paradigm. Each action-researcher has represented their explanation for their own professional learning within their social context as a unique constellation of values, understandings and actions. They have communicated the meanings of their values and understandings as they emerge through time and action. They have shown how their values and understandings constitute the standards of judgement they use to test

the validity of their claims to educational knowledge. These values and understandings have been legitimated as appropriate standards of judgement by a range of different examiners.

To assist other researchers to test the validity of the claims in this paper the relevant theses, dissertations and other material is available on the World Wide Web at address:

http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw

Educational importance of the study

The importance of the study is that it claims that evidence exists in the public domain which shows how educational action researchers have created a new paradigm of educational research. It claims that this evidence shows how educational theories can be created from the studies of singularities which have the capacity to produce valid explanations for the professional learning of university and school teachers as they work in the process of improving the quality of learning with their students.

This evidence, in the above Theses and Dissertations, includes analyses which show how explanations for the educational development of individuals, can created from the studies of singularities. The evidence shows how the explanations can be subjected to tests of validity which can satisfy particular meanings of objectivity, subjectivity, rigour and generalizability without distorting the practitioner knowledge through the imposition of inappropriate standards of judgement by the Academy.

It may bear repeating that living theories are not characterised solely by a set of interconnected propositions. They can include such propositions within their dialogical form of representation. Living theories are characterised by the inclusion of 'I' as a living contradiction. They are characterised by the explanatory power of the values and understandings which a practitioner-researcher embodies in their explanation for their own learning as they work at living more fully their values and at extending their understandings. They are characterised by the use of these values and understandings as the standards of judgement they use to test the validity of their claims to educational knowledge. They are characterised by the dialectic between the explanations, the action researcher's present practice and the intention to create a better future.

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My thanks to James Finnegan for the care and sensitivity with which he responded to my ideas in the process of writing this paper. I am also grateful for the weekly discussions with the practitioner researchers in the Department of Education at Bath University for the sustaining pleasure of their company and their commitment to education and educational action research. I am thinking of Terry Hewitt, Ben Cunningham, Moira Laidlaw, Jane Verburg, Pat D'Arcy, Helen Hallissey, Rhona McEune, Robyn Pound and Pam Cruse. Sarah Fletcher and Jen Russ are two colleagues in the Department of Education whose commitment to education sustains my own enthusiasm. Tom Russell, Professor of Education at Queens University, continues to provide encouragement and insight into my own learning from experience, through our e-mail correspondences and conference presentations. The quality of Tom's 'educative correspondences' and the work of his education students can be seen on the internet at address:

http://educ.queensu.ca/projects/action_research/queensar.htm

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